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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000903

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SUBJECT: DPP CHAIR TSAI ON KMT CHAIRMAN-ELECT MA, CHINA POLICY, CHEN SHUI-BIAN

REF: TAIPEI 896

Classified By: Acting Director Robert S. Wang,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. DPP Chair Tsai Ing-wen dismissed the idea of having a dialogue with President Ma Ying-jeou once he assumes the KMT chairmanship. Ma's overtures to meet with her were not genuine, Tsai told the Acting Director in a July 28 meeting. Although concerned about Ma's perceived pro-unification leanings, Tsai claimed that the DPP would not block unification if the general Taiwan population expressed this desire in a referendum. This stance, however, likely would not resonate with segments within the DPP that have traditionally touted Taiwan independence. End summary.

Dialogue With Ma Not In The Cards

¶2. (C) Even though President Ma Ying-jeou will become her direct counterpart when he assumes the KMT chairmanship on September 12, opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chair Tsai Ing-wen dismissed the idea of a dialogue with Ma in a July 28 meeting with the Acting Director. She explained that to Ma it would just be a "show" and an opportunity to play things up. Tsai did not see the benefit of engaging Ma when he does not take into account the views of Taiwan's opposition.

¶3. (C) Tsai said Ma was "too careful" in his response to Chinese President Hu Jintao's letter congratulating him on his election as KMT Chairman and in handling of cross-Strait relations overall. Ma failed to use any title in his response to Hu (septel). He did not refer to himself as "chairman-elect" probably because had he used that title and not "President" the Taiwan populace may have criticized him widely, Tsai speculated.

¶4. (C) Ma's efforts to deepen economic ties to China does have a positive effect on Taiwan in the short-term, for example, the increased PRC investment boosts the Taiwan stock market, but Tsai cautioned Ma is being "short-sighted" and worries that Ma is not resilient enough when facing PRC counterparts. Not only does Ma refrain from calling himself "President" but he also has been decidedly silent on issues to which he was once sympathetic. Tsai noted Ma avoided commenting on recent unrest in Xinjiang and Tibet and no longer is publicly supportive of the Falungong.

15. (C) Tsai opined that the PRC is pressuring Ma to add political elements to the cross-Strait agenda. While she believed Ma will not pursue a political agenda before 2012 (referring to Ma's presumed bid for a second presidential term) as it would be "political suicide," Tsai said Ma was becoming more and more like former President Chen Shui-bian. She explained that if people thought Chen moved "too fast" toward independence, then Ma is moving too fast in the opposite direction. Ma would not object to unification, maintained Tsai, claiming that Ma, "deep in his heart," believes he is Chinese and that Taiwan and China are a divided country that should one day be unified. Moreover, according to DPP polls, the support for unification within the KMT is higher than the support for independence within the DPP.

DPP on Independence, Ma's China Policy...

16. (C) The DPP still prefers independence but also believes in democracy and democratic mechanisms, maintained Tsai. In her mind, it is up to the general populace to decide Taiwan's path. If a referendum reveals that Taiwan people prefer unification with China, then the DPP would not block this, said Tsai.

17. (C) For now, Taiwan's relationship with China contains too many uncertainties and efforts should be made to create a stable, predictable environment. DPP supporters have expressed concern about PRC investment in Taiwan's

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infrastructure, media, high technology sectors, for example. The Ma administration does not appear to understand these concerns and is running the risk of making Taiwan too economically dependent on China. Tsai maintained that the DPP is not opposed to Taiwan having ties to China but wants to keep Taiwan's options open and let its people decide. She expressed concern the Ma administration policies are reducing the option for independence. She likened Taiwan to a car being driven on a bumpy road. While the recommended speed may be about 40 kilometers/hour, the KMT is going 100 or 120 km/hr. The DPP is trying to apply the brakes, not to stop the car but simply to slow it down.

...And Party Rules on Members' China Trips

18. (C) Just as the DPP is cautious on Ma's efforts to deepen Taiwan's ties with China, the party also is taking precautions when it comes to its members' interest in traveling to the PRC. Tsai explained that the party does not have an overall ban on travel to China but needed to review trip purposes, referring to new rules stipulating that senior members submit non-personal PRC travel plans to DPP headquarters (see ref A). Part of the criteria involves whether a trip helps a member to do his or her job. Tsai explained that DPP supporters did not oppose Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu's trip to China in May because she went to promote the World Games. On the other hand, there was "full consensus" within the party to expel former legislator Hsu Jung-shu and former Council of Agriculture head Fan Chen-tzung for ignoring a party ban and attending the KMT-CCP Fifth Cross-Strait Economic, Trade and Cultural Forum in China. Their trip "served no purpose at all."

Chen Shui-bian Deserves Judicial Fairness

19. (C) President Ma could try to ensure that former President Chen Shui-bian is treated fairly by Taiwan's judicial system but does not, claimed Tsai. She acknowledged that Chen may have violated certain laws but still deserves a fair trial. Tsai alleged that individuals close to Ma are quietly influencing the judges and prosecutors and Ma could

direct them to stop doing so. Chen will definitely be found guilty at the end of the first trial and will face "heavy" criminal punishment, maintained Tsai. (Note: The Judge is slated to announce verdicts in the corruption cases involving Chen and his family on September 11, 2009.)

Comment

¶10. (C) Tsai was relaxed and seemed more comfortable in her position as chair than in previous meetings. Asked about her future plans, Tsai maintained she was focused on completing her first term as DPP chair, which ends in May 2010. Although she cracked that her job was like "mandatory military service," Tsai said she would decide her future (whether to seek a second term) after the December 5 local elections. Tsai's somewhat more open comments and perspective on China are a sharp contrast to previous DPP chairs, who rose up within the party ranks, and reflect her diverse background as former Mainland Affairs Council Chairwoman, professor, just to name some of her previous posts. Her comments about DPP not blocking unification if a referendum indicated that the general Taiwan population wanted it are her own personal views as the radical segments of the DPP surely would disagree and continue their fight for independence.

WANG